

DREAM ANALYSIS AND LITERARY INTERPRETATION

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ABSTRACT

Over the time, the human relationships and personalities are threatened by various anxieties, multiple manifestations of phobias, grievances, sense of loss or detachment, sense of nostalgia and belongings, struggles to get oneself free, fears of persecution, the fragmentation of self and the unfulfilled desires which have vividly served in a greater degree to the development of 'Psychoanalytic Theory' as an innovative technique of criticism in interpreting the literary texts.

KEYWORDS: Psychoanalytic Theory, Interpreting Literary Texts & Dream Analysis etc....

Received: Apr 07, 2017; **Accepted:** Mar 02, 2017; **Published:** Jun 03, 2017; **Paper Id.:** IJELJUN20178

INTRODUCTION

Just as the central focus of the New Criticism and Deconstruction is on the 'text', the focus of the Reader Response Criticism is on the 'Reader' and the focus of the Marxist Criticism is on the socio-political conditions of the text, the focus of the psychoanalytic criticism is on the 'author' or an 'the psyche of the characters' in his literary texts. The work of literature is seen as analogous to fantasy which is treated as a symptom of a particular writer. Psychoanalytic theory examines the role of parents and one's personal brought-up in the establishment of personality and social behavior.

The theory of 'Psychoanalytic Criticism' has its roots in the distinguished discipline 'Psychology'. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), an Austrian neurologist is the first to coin the techniques of psychoanalysis, which later influenced a large variety of disciplines. Psychoanalysis is primarily a clinical method for treating the diseases and disorders pertaining to psychopathology through the means of a dialogue between a patient and a psychoanalyst. The term 'Psychoanalysis' is defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary as a form of a therapy which aims at curing the mental disorders by investigating the interaction of the conscious and unconscious elements in the mind.

With the advent of the popularization of Freud's theories of psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic criticism has been emerged as a critical literary tool in the United States, Europe and the other countries during the 1930s and 1940s. It has become one of the significant literary approaches and theories of the present day scenario.

According to Freud, the human beings either willingly or unwillingly repress some of their tendencies to pleasure, pain, repentance, gratification, etc., The state of repression, being between preconscious and unconscious state, functions like a storehouse of all the unfulfilled desires or traumatic past events and experiences. The reflections of this storehouse have a powerful influence on all the human actions. When the feelings of repression become excessive, they make the people sick. And, sometimes the human beings try to transform the repressed

desires and feelings into much purer or idealized form through the practices of religion, noble and heroic deeds, the habits of writing and doing some other selfless things in order to discard the unfulfilled desires, regrets and uncontrollable emotions.

Freud has introduced three meaningful terms – ‘unconscious’, ‘pre-conscious’ and ‘conscious’ to make his theory clear. The unconscious, which is often driven by the ‘Id’, is the center and the source of the psychoanalyzed subject. Generally, every human being is subjected to find pleasure by forcing the thoughts into the realm of the unconscious that is, mostly, as Freud calls the ‘Pleasure Principle’ (Eagleton 151). According to him, the impulse to avoid all unpleasure governs the psychic activity in human beings. If too much is repressed into the unconscious, it is known as ‘neurosis’ that makes people suffer.

Like Karl Marx, who concentrates on the importance of needing to labor in terms of the social relations and social classes, Freud insists on its implications for the psychical life. Unlike the animals, man is a constant dependent on his parents as he is born sensitively, and further needs much assistance from them. By birth, he possesses several natural instincts which he, very often, tries to satisfy them through various processes.

Much of Freud’s theory is built precisely on a myth which is also a piece of classic literature, Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex. It is also known as a tragedy of destiny. And, it is not just another complex, but it is the structure of relations by which the human beings come to be the men and women. Freud further says that the Oedipus complex is the beginning of morality, conscience, law, and all forms of social and religious authority. The human subject who emerges from the oedipal process is a split subject, torn between conscious and unconscious.

Dream analysis is one of the important notions in Freudian theory. He considers dreams as possible entrances or outlets for repressed ideas. They are essentially symbolic fulfillments of the unconscious hopes and wishes. Dreams, in turn, become symbolic texts which need to be understood. In this context, Roman Jakobson’s usage of two terms regarding the human language, metaphor and metonymy which, later, moved the French psychologist Jacques Lacan to comment that the unconscious is structured like a language.

Freud opines that dreams are the outcomes of daily occurrences or thoughts of everyday life. He also states that the dreams can also function as wish fulfillments by satisfying the wish gratification, the repressed sexual desires or the regret of one’s childhood and the deep longing for the execution of events in the future. Dreams may find the forms of outlet through the interplay of words or a set of images which Freud terms them as condensation, displacement and distortion. Not only the dreams, but also the ‘paraphrase provides an access to the unconscious. They are unaccountable slips of the tongue, failures of memory, bungling, misreading and mislaying which can be traced to unconscious wishes and intentions. The presence of the unconscious is also betrayed in jokes, which for Freud have a largely libidinal, anxious or aggressive content.

Freud’s theory of dream interpretation has given a much wider perspective to the literary critic in evaluating the text. According to him, a dream is a disguised fulfillment of a suppressed or repressed wish. The outlets of the dream have to assume a disguise in order to get through the consciousness and achieve its aim. His analysis on the subject ‘dream’ studies about how real events are transformed into dream-images. There are four concepts in this process. First one is ‘Transference’ which is also known as ‘a substitute of some other figure in the original one’ has been the re-directing of emotions towards the psychoanalytic analysis. Second one is ‘Projection’ where aspects of the negative qualities of the

personality are attributed to another person to show one's likes and dislikes. Third one is 'Displacement' - normally the human beings substitute others in their own images symbolically. Fourth one is 'Condensation' – a process where several events and qualities are associated in one image. According to Freud, literature like dreams communicates figuratively and symbolically. The unconscious of the author is sometimes partly or completely revealed through the characters of his work. Psychoanalytic Criticism has given a wide invitation to the critics who judge the pieces of literary works by probing into the psychology of the authors as well as the characters.

Psychoanalytic Criticism is based on the assumption that the purpose of the work of art is the same as that which 'Psychoanalysis' has taken to be the purpose of the dream: the secret gratification of an infantile and forbidden wish that is fixed in the unconscious state of the author obviously comes out through one's literary work. Freud considers dreams as possible entrances or outlets for repressed ideas. They are essentially the symbolic fulfillments of unconscious hopes and wishes. And, they are the symbolic texts which need to be understood. This theory also examines the role of parents in the establishment of personality traits and social behavior of the children.

As man is a neurotic animal, writers do find the ways of gratifying or expressing their secret fantasies, desires and obsessions through their literary works and dreams. The work of literature is seen as an analogy to fantasy and is treated as a symptom of a particular writer, and the literary character is treated as if he was a living being within the fantasy. For instance, the story 'A Dreamer' which has been one of the effective stories of Barbara Baynton provides ample evidence to this analogy.

In the story 'A Dreamer' the central figure is a young pregnant woman who pays a long overdue visit in the cold wet night to her mother. She walks three miles through a violent storm and her journey through it becomes a metaphoric one through a landscape which has been experienced as a nightmare. The physical world, she confronts, turns into a hostile one as her psychological fears dominate her body, mind and soul. That's why the trees of willows are more than the willows to her, and they are completely turned into uncooperative elements.

Barbara Baynton sharply focuses into the confused state of the mind of a woman for whom motherhood is an issue compounded of violence, personal guilt and sentimentalized love. In the dreamer's conscious mind, motherhood is a stereotype with one important characteristic: mother protects. This idea, having occupied her unconscious state is many times expressed in her bold adventure:

From the branch of a tree overhead, she heard a watchful mother-bird's warning call, and the twitter of the disturbed nestlings. The tender care of this bird-mother awoke memories of her childhood. What mattered the lonely darkness, when it led to mother? Her forebodings fled, she faced the old track unheedingly and ever and ever she smiled, as she protested their meeting.

"Daughter!"

"Mother!"

She could feel loving arms around her, and a mother's sacred kiss. (Krimmer and Alan Lawson 5 (the later references to this text are noted in parentheses))

The daughter continuously clings to this mindlessly sentimental image of her mother' when she struggles desperately in the flooded river. Then she hears her mother's "sweet dream voice" whispering "Little Women" (9).

Suddenly, the violent nature becomes kind and soothing: “Soft, strong arms carried her on. Weakness aroused the melting idea that all had been a mistake, and she had been fighting with friends. The wind even crooned a lullaby” (P.9).

Her childhood personal myth that mother makes everything comfortable for the daughter as she loves makes her perceive the violent change in nature. In fact, the nature itself is horrible, but her fears and grievances make the situation even more cruel and violent than the before phase of her life. When she hears the voice of her mother, she gets comforted in her difficult situation.

In her tedious journey, nature is sometimes cruel and sometimes kind to the women. For many reasons, the daughter has not seen her mother for a very long time. She considers this absence an act of negligence, bringing with it guilt, and so invites her long walk through a violent storm believing that ‘there was atonement in these difficulties and dangers’ (P.). And the natural world, with its various aspects gives punishment to purify her from the guilt and doubts.

Still, she would not go back. Though the roar of that rushing water was making her giddy, though the deafening wind fought her for every inch, she would not turn back. Long ago she should have come to her old mother, and her heart gave a bound of savage rapture in thus giving the sweat of her body for the sin of her soul (P.8).

Autobiographical element cannot be ruled out in this instance since there is evidence to show that Barbara Baynton might have had this kind of guilt and doubt in her life towards her mother since in her biographical sketches the writer has constantly concealed the name of her mother and gives a fictitious name to her. And when the daughter in the story reaches her mother’s home, she comes to know that her mother has already died and her quest becomes futile. It is not just her mother is dead, but also she dreams is finished – ‘The daughter parted the curtains, and the light fell on the face of the sleeper who would dream no dreams that night’ (P.10). And Baynton uses several images of face, mouth, voice and sound, ‘watchful mother-bird’s warning call’, mother’s prayer and so on to depict her unconscious struggle to come to terms with the state of conscious.

The unconscious which has been one of the chief notions in Freudian theory is a primary process that seeks immediate hallucination, but the end result is always disillusionment and displeasure. The pre-conscious is a secondary process, which leads to gratification through the temporary toleration of displeasure. The ego, the link between the unconscious and the pre-conscious consists of Id, reason and common sense and it often controls all mental processes. The consciousness is related to the present.

Neurosis is the conflict between the ego and the Id. Freud has introduced a tripartite model saying that the human psyche can be divided into three important parts, viz., Id, ego and superego. He further discusses this model in the 1920 essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and has elaborated it in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), which seem to be an alternative terminology for his previous set of terms, namely, conscious, unconscious and preconscious. In literature, sometimes characters can take these parts; ‘Id’ is the completely unconscious, irrational, impulsive and childlike nature of the psyche containing the source of basic impulses and drives which seek immediate pleasure or gratification. ‘Id’ is often operated on the ‘pleasure principle’. It houses the libido, the source of psychosexual desires and psychic energy. Freud acknowledged that his use of the term *Id* derives from the writings of Georg Groddeck. Ego is rational and logical, and it corresponds to reality. On the other hand, the superego is the one which bans inappropriate desires by often making the person work through the punishment in the form of guilt, fear or sin. The super-ego is the moral component of the psyche, which takes into account no special circumstances in which the morally right thing may not be right for every given situation. It is the

part of the psyche that is usually reflected most directly in a person's actions.

According to Freud, the unresolved conflicts that cause neurosis in human beings find expression in literature. It is nothing but the external expression of the author's unconscious mind. Psychosis is the outcome of the disturbance between the ego and the outside world.

Freud's theory of psychoanalysis is mostly centered on 'Oedipus Complex'. The child passing through various stages primarily at the stage of infancy finds pleasure by sucking milk from her mother's breast that is considered by Freud as the first dawning of sexuality. Eventually his mouth becomes not only an organ of his physical survival but also an erotogenic zone. The relation between mother and the child has a libidinal dimension. And sexuality has been born as a kind of drive which is at first inseparable from biological instinct, but which has now separated itself out from it and attained certain autonomy. Sexuality for Freud is itself a 'perversion' – a swerving away of a natural self-perspective instinct towards another goal.

As the child grows, he passes through the oral stage, as Freud calls it as the first phase of sexual life, which is associated with the drive to incorporate objects. In anal stage, the anus becomes an erotogenic zone and some active and passive issues remain in this sadistic stage where the child gets pleasure from expulsion and destruction. Thirdly the phallic stage focuses on the child's libido.

The function of psychoanalysis can be understood in a better way with Freud's own slogans such as 'Where *Id* was, there shall *Ego* be'. He says where men and women are in the firm grip of circumstances and situations, which they cannot perceive or control, there reason and common sense shall rule. Freud's estimate of human capacities is on the whole pessimistic and conservative as we are dominated by a desire for gratification.

Freud's theory of criticism has been attacked on a various grounds. Some feminists criticize Freud for having given more importance to patriarchal attitudes than the issues about women whom he considered passive.

Psychoanalysis as a medical practice concentrates on people's repressed desires and forces them to conform to random choices. But these may be mostly limited to some concepts of sexual notions which do not have permanent worth by Nature. Freud analyses everything and every issue by relating it to sexuality, he says, is central to human life that provides a component of all our activities but that is not a sexual reductionism.

Freud says that human beings are the reflections of what they have experienced from their childhood days, surroundings and nearby relations. The prejudices that girls are inferior to boys and the notion that girls who are always dependant ones make woman subordinate to men have given the chances to the feminists to criticize Freudian's views. However, this approach provides a clear understanding about how the literary texts are drawn out of the experiences of the author.

Recently the relationship of psychoanalytic theory to literary criticism has undergone many vicissitudes. As a result, the critical focus has shifted from the psychology of the author as well as the characters of his literary texts to that of the reader and that relation between author, reader, text and language.

CONCLUSIONS

Hence, the discipline, psychoanalytic criticism with its various notions has influenced the literature. It has been used mainly to explore the author's or his characters' psyche through their dreams, language, images and symbols. It adds

much meaning and appreciation to the text. In the recent scenario, it has become an influential literary technique of criticism.

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